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ELFRIDA,

A
DRAMATIC POEM.

WRITTEN ON THE MODEL OF
THE ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY.

BY WILLIAM MASON, A. M.
AUTHOR OF CARACTACUS^k

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS PERFORMED AT
THE THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN,
IN THE YEAR 1773.

The Lines distinguished by single inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation; and those printed in Italics are the Additions of the Theatre.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE division of the following excellent Poem into Acts, with all other particulars, specifying the manner wherein it was represented at Covent-Garden Theatre, is in this Edition pointed out, without the smallest injury to the original text; such passages as are varied or omitted in the performance being marked by inverted commas.---For the precision wherewith this is executed, the present Editor acknowledges himself obliged to Mr. Hull, who, from his high respect for the Author, very readily undertook it.

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THE JOURNAL OF

JOHN R. BROWN
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IN THE
MOUNTAIN REGION OF THE
WEST

1859

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THE ARGUMENT.

EDGAR King of England, having heard the beauty of *Elfrida*, daughter of *Orgar*, Earl of Devonshire, highly celebrated, sent his favourite minister *Athelwold* to her father's castle, to discover whether she was really so beautiful, as Fame reported her to be; and, if she was, to offer her his Crown in marriage. *Athelwold*, on seeing her, fell violently in love with her himself; and married her; conveying her soon after to his own castle in *Harewood Forest*, where he visited her, by stealth from court; and in his absence left her with a train of British Virgins, who form the Chorus. After three months, *Orgar* disapproving this confinement of his daughter, came disguised to *Harewood* to discover the cause of it. His arrival opens the Drama.—The incidents, which are produced by *Athelwold's* return from court (who was absent when *Orgar* came to his castle) and afterwards by the unexpected visit of the King, form the Episode of the Tragedy; the feigned pardon of *Athelwold*, drawn from the King by the earnest intercessions of *Elfrida*, brings on the *Peripeteia*, or change of fortune; and the single combat between the King and *Athelwold*, in which the latter is slain, occasions *Elfrida* to take the vow, which completes the Catastrophe.

Dramatis Personæ.

Men.

ORGAR, Earl of Devonshire, Mr. Clarke.
ATHELWOLD, Husband to ELFRIDA, . . . Mr. Smith.
EDWIN, Mr. Hull.
EDGAR, King of England, Mr. Bensley.

Women.

ELFRIDA, Daughter to ORGAR, Mrs. Hartley.
ALBINA, Mrs. Mattocks.
CHORUS of British Virgins.

ORGAR, disguised in a Peasant's Habit, speaks the Prologue.

*Scene, a Lawn before Athelwold's Castle in Harewood Forest,
which continues during the whole performance.*

Those passages distinguished by *double inverted commas*,
are musically performed.



ELFRIDA.

ACT I. SCENE I.

ORGAR enters.

Orgar.

How nobly does this venerable wood,
Gilt with the glories of the orient sun,
Embosom yon fair mansion! 'The soft air
'Salutes me with most cool and temp'rate breath;
'And, as I tread, the flow'r-besprinkled lawn
'Sends up a gale of fragrance.' I should guess,
If e'er Content deign'd visit mortal clime,
This was her place of dearest residence.
'Grant Heav'n! I find it such.' 'Tis now three months,
Since first Earl Athelwold espous'd my daughter.
He then besought me, for some little space
The nuptials might be secret; 'many reasons,
'He said, induc'd to this: I made no pause,
'But, resting on his prudence, to his will
'Gave absolute concurrence.' Soon as married,
He to this secret seat convey'd Elfrida;
Convey'd her as by stealth, enjoy'd, and left her:
'Yet not without I know not what excuse
'Of call to court, of Edgar's royal friendship,

‘ And England’s welfare. To his prince he went :’
And since, as by intelligence I gather,
He oft returns to this his cloyster’d wife ;
‘ But ever with a privacy most studied ;
‘ Borrowing disguises till inventive art
‘ Can scarce supply him with variety.’
His visits, as they’re stol’n, are also short ;
Seldom beyond the circuit of one sun :
Then back to court, while she his absence mourns
Full many a lonely hour. I brook not this.
Had Athelwold espous’d some base-born peasant,
This usage had been apt : but when he took
My daughter to his arms, he took a virgin,
Thro’ whose rich veins the blood of British Kings
Ran in unsullied stream. ‘ Her lineage sure
‘ Might give her place and notice with the noblest
‘ In Edgar’s court. Elfrida’s beauty too
‘ (I speak not from a father’s foolish fondness)
‘ Would shine amid the fairest, and reflect
‘ No vulgar glory on that beauty’s master.
‘ This act bespeaks the madman. Who, that own’d
‘ An em’rald, jasper, or rich chrysolite,
‘ Would hide its lustre, or not bid it blaze
‘ Conspicuous on his brow ?’ Haply, Athelwold
May have espous’d some other. ‘ ’Sdeath, he durst not.
‘ My former feats in arms must have inform’d him,
‘ That Orgar, while he liv’d, would never prove
‘ A traitor to his honour.’ If he has——
This aged arm is not so much unstrung
By slack’ning years, but just revenge will brace it.
And, by yon awful heav’n—But hold, my rage.
I came to search into this matter coolly.
Hence, to conceal the Father and the Earl,

This pilgrim's staff, and scrip, and all these marks
Of vagrant poverty.

CHORUS [*Sung within.*]

"Hail to thy living light, ambrosial Morn!
"All hail thy roseat ray!"

Orgar. But hark, the sound of sweetest minstrelsy
Breaks on mine ear. The females, I suppose,
Whom Athelwold has left my child's attendants;
That, when she wails the absence of her lord,
Their lenient airs, and sprightly-fancied songs,
May steal away her woes. See, they approach:
This grove shall shroud me till they cease their strain;
Then I'll address them with some feigned tale.

[*He retires.*]

Enter CHORUS.

ODE.

"Hail to thy living light,
"Ambrosial Morn! all hail thy roseat ray:
"That bids young Nature all her charms display
"In varied beauty bright;
"That bids each dewy-spangled flowret rise,
"And dart around its vermil dies;
"Bids silver lustre grace yon sparkling tide,
"That winding warbles down the mountain's side.
"Away, ye Goblins all,
"Wont the bewilder'd traveller to daunt;
"Whose vagrant feet have trac'd your secret haunt
"Beside some lonely wall,

‘ Or shatter’d ruin of a moss-grown tow’r,
‘ Where, at pale midnight’s stillest hour,
‘ Through each rough chink the solemn orb of night
‘ Pours momentary gleams of trembling light.
“ Away, ye Elves, away :
“ Shrink at ambrosial Morning’s living ray ;
‘ That living ray, whose pow’r benign
‘ Unfolds the scene of glory to our eye,
‘ Where, thron’d in artless majesty,
‘ The cherub Beauty sits on Nature’s rustic shrine.’

Enter ORGAR.

Albina. Silence, my sisters. Whence this rudeness,
stranger,

That thus has prompted thine unbidden ear
To listen to our strains?

Orgar. Your pardon, Virgins :
I meant not rudeness, tho’ I dar’d to listen ;
For ah ! what ear so fortify’d and barr’d
‘ Against the force of powerful harmony,’
But would with transport to such sweet assailants
Surrender its attention? Never yet
Have I pass’d by the night-bird’s fav’rite spray,
‘ What time she pours her wild and artless song,’
Without attentive pause and silent rapture ;
How could I then, with savage disregard,
Hear voices tun’d by nature sweet as her’s,
Grac’d with all art’s addition?

Albina. Thy mean garb
And this thy courtly phrase but ill accord.
Whence, and what art thou, stranger?

Orgar. Virgins, know
These limbs have oft been wrapt in richer vest :

But what avails it now? all have their fate;
And mine has been most wretched.

‘*Albina.* May we ask
‘What cruel cause——

‘*Orgar.* No! let this hapless breast
‘Still hide the melancholy tale.’

Albina. We know,
There oft is found an avarice in grief;
And the wan eye of Sorrow loves to gaze
Upon its secret hoard of treasur’d woes
In pining solitude. Perhaps thy mind
Takes the same pensive cast: if not, permit
That we, in social sympathy, may drop
The tender tear.

‘*Orgar.* Ah! ill would it become ye,
‘To let the woes of such a wretch as I am
‘E’er dim your bright eyes with a pitying tear.

‘*Albina.* The eye, that will not weep another’s sorrow,
‘Should boast no gentler brightness than the glare
‘That reddens in the eye-ball of the wolf.
‘Let us intreat——’

Orgar. Know, Virgins, I was born
To ample property of lands and flocks,
On this side Tweeda’s stream. My youth and vigour
Achiev’d full many a feat of martial prowess:

‘Nor was my skill in chivalry unnoted
‘In the fair volume of my sov’reign’s love;
‘Who ever held me in his best esteem,
‘And closest to his person. When he paid,
‘What all must pay, to fate; and short-liv’d Edwy
‘Mounted the vacant throne, which now his brother
‘Fills (as loud fame reports) right royally;
I then, unfit for pageantry and courts,

Sat down in peace among my faithful vassals,
At my paternal seat. But ah! not long
Had I enjoy'd the sweets of that recess,
Ere by the savage inroads of base hinds,
That sallied frequent from the Scottish heights,
My lands were all laid waste, my people murder'd;
And I, through impotence of age unfit
To quell their brutal rage, was forc'd to drag
My mis'ries through the land, a friendless wand'rer.

Albina. We pity and condole thy wretched state,
But we can do no more: which, on thy part,
Claims just returns of pity; for whose lot
Demands it more than theirs, whom fate forbids
To taste the joys of courteous charity;
' To wipe the trickling tears, which dew the cheek
' Of palsied age; to smooth its furrow'd brow,
' And pay its gray hairs each due reverence?
' Yet such delight we are forbid to taste!
For 'tis our lord's command, that not a stranger,
However high or lowly his degree,
Have entrance at these gates.

Orgar. Who may this tyrant——

Albina. Alas, no tyrant he; ' the more our wonder
' At this harsh mandate: tenderness and pity
' Have made his breast their home.' He is a man
More apt, through inborn gentleness, to err,
In giving mercy's tide too free a course,
Than with a thrifty and illiberal hand
To circumscribe its channel. This his praise
You'll hear the general theme in Edgar's court:
For Edgar ranks him first in his high favour;
Loads him with honours, which the Earl receives,
As does the golden censer frankincense,

Only to spread a sacred gale of blessings
Around on all.

Orgar. Methinks, this pleasing portrait
Bears strong resemblance of Lord Athelwold.

Albina. Himself: no Briton but has heard his fame.

Orgar. 'Tis wondrous strange; can you conceive no cause
For this his conduct?

Albina. None, that we may trust.

Orgar. Your garbs bespeak you for the fair attendants
Of some illustrious dame, the wife, or sister
Of this dread Earl.

Albina. On this head too, old man,
We are commanded a religious silence:
'Which strictly we obey; for well we know
'Fidelity's the best, and fairest wreath,
'That can adorn a servant's brow'—Farewel,
With our best wishes; we do trespass much
To hold this open converse with a stranger.

Orgar. Stay, Virgins, stay; have ye no friendly shed,
But bord'ring on your castle, where these limbs
Might lay their load of mis'ry for an hour?
Have ye no food, however mean and homely,
Wherewith I might support declining nature?
Ev'n while I speak I find my spirits fail;
And well, full well, I know, these trembling feet,
Ere I can pace a hundred steps, will sink
Beneath their wretched burthen.

Albina. Piteous sight!
What shall we do, my sisters? To admit
This man beneath the roof, would be to scorn
The Earl's strict interdict: and yet my heart
Bleeds to behold that white, old, rev'rend head
Bow'd with such misery. Yes, we must aid him.

Hie thee, poor Pilgrim, to yon neighb'ring bow'r,
 ' O'er which an old oak spreads his awful arm,
 ' Mantled in brownest foliage, and beneath
 ' The ivy, gadding from th' untwisted stem;
 ' Curtains each verdant side.' There thou may'st rest;
 There too, perchance, some of our sisterhood
 May bring thee speedy sustenance.

Org. Kind Heav'n!

Reward——

Albina. Ah! stay not here to thank us,
 But haste to give thine age this meet repose.
 That done, we do conjure thee leave the place
 With cautious secresy; for were it known,
 That thus we trespass'd on our lord's command,
 The consequence were fatal.

Org. Fairest Maid!

Think not I'll basely draw down punishments
 On my preservers. I retire. May blessings
 Show'r'd from yon fount of bliss repay your kindness.

[*Exit Orgar.*]

Albina. Yes, sisters, yes, when pale distress
 Implores your aiding hand,
 Let not a partial faithfulness,
 Let not a mortal's vain command
 Urge you to break th' unalterable laws
 Of heav'n-descended charity.
 Ah! follow still the soft-ey'd Deity;
 ' For know, each path she draws,
 ' Along the plain of life,
 ' Meets at the central dome of heart-felt joy.
 ' Follow the soft-ey'd Deity ;'
 She bids ye, as ye hope for blessings, bless.
 Aid then the gen'ral cause of gen'ral happiness.

AIR.

" Humanity, thy awful strain
 " Shall ever greet our ear,
 " Sonorous, sweet, and clear.
 " And as amid the sprightly-swelling train
 " Of dulcet notes, that breathe
 " From flute or lyre,
 " The deep base rolls its manly melody,
 " Guiding the tuneful choir;

CHORUS.

" So thou, Humanity, shalt lead along
 " Th' accordant passions in their moral song,
 " And give our mental concert truest harmony."

Albina. But see, Elfrida comes.

' Should we again resume our former strain,
 ' And hail the morn that paints her waking beauties;
 ' Or stay her gentle bidding? Rather stay;
 For, as I think, she seems in pensive mood;
 And there are times, when to the sorrowing soul
 Ev'n harmony is harshness.

Enter ELFRIDA, and attendant Ladies.

Elf. Oh my Virgins,
 With what a leaden and retarding weight
 Does Expectation load the wing of Time?
 Alas, how have these three dull hours crept on,
 ' Since first the crimson mantle of the morn
 ' Skirted yon gay horizon! Say, my friends,
 Have I miscounted? Did not Athelwold
 At parting fix this morn for his return?
 This dear long-wish'd-for morn? He did, he did,
 And seal'd it with a kiss; I could not err,

And yet he comes not. ' He was wont outstrip
 ' The sun's most early speed, and make its rising
 ' To me unwish'd and needless. This delay
 ' Creates strange doubts and scruples in my breast.'
 Courts throng with beauties, and my Athelwold
 Has a soft, susceptible heart, ' as prone
 ' To yield its love to ev'ry sparkling eye,
 ' As is the musk-rose to dispense its fragrance
 ' To ev'ry whisp'ring breeze;' perhaps he's false,
 Perhaps Elfrida's wretched.

' *Albina.* See, Elfrida,
 ' Ah see! how round yon branching elm the ivy
 ' Clasps its green folds, and poisons what supports it.
 ' Not less injurious to the tender shoots
 ' Of growing love is sickly jealousy.

' *Elf.* My mind nor pines with sickly jealousy,
 ' Nor triumphs in security and peace.'
 Who loves, must fear; and sure who loves like me,
 Must greatly fear.

Albina. Yet whence the cause? Your Earl
 Has ever yet (this little breach excepted)
 Been punctual to appointment. ' Did his eye
 ' Glow with less ardent passion when he left you,
 ' Than at the first blest meeting? No! I mark'd him,
 ' His parting glance was that of fervent love,
 ' And constancy unalter'd.' Do not fear him.

Elf. I should not fear him, were his present stay
 The only cause. Alas, it is not so!
 Why comes my Earl so secret to these arms?
 Why, but because he dreads the just reproach
 Of some deluded fair one? Why am I
 Here shrouded up, like the pale Votarist,
 Who knows no visitant, save the lone owl

‘ That nightly leaves his ivy-shrouded cell,
 ‘ And sails on slow wing through the cloister’d isles,
 ‘ List’ning her saintly orisons?’ Why am I
 Deny’d to follow my departed Lord
 Whene’er his duty calls him to the palace?

Albina. Covet not that; the noblest proof of love
 That Athelwold can give, is still to guard
 Your beauties from the blast of courtly gales.
 ‘ The crimson blush of virgin modesty,
 ‘ The delicate soft tints of innocence
 ‘ There all fly off, and leave no boast behind
 ‘ But well-rang’d, faded features.’ Ah! Elfrida,
 Should you be doom’d, which happier fate forbid!
 To drag your hours through all that nauseous scene
 Of pageantry and vice; your purer breast,
 True to its virtuous relish, soon would heave
 A fervent sigh for innocence and Harewood.

Elf. You much mistake me, Virgins; the throng’d palace
 Were undesir’d by me, did not that palace
 Detain my Athelwold. If he were here,
 His presence would convert this range of oaks
 To stately columns; these gay-liv’ried flow’rs
 To troops of gallant ladies; and yon deer,
 That jut their antlers forth in sportive fray,
 To armed knights at joust or tournament.
 If Athelwold dwelt here; if no ambition
 Could lure his steps from love, and this still forest;
 ‘ If I might never moan his time of absence,
 ‘ Longer than that which serv’d him for the chase
 ‘ Or of the wolf, or stag; or when he bore
 ‘ The hood-wink’d falcon forth; might these, my Virgins,
 ‘ And these alone, be love’s short intervals,’
 I should not have one thought remote from Harewood.

Albina. And would you wish that Athelwold should slight
The weal of England, ' and on these light toys
' Waste his unvalued hours? No, fond Elfrida;
' His active soul is wing'd for nobler flights.

' *Elf.* What then, must England's welfare hold my Earl
' For ever from these shades?

' *Albina.* We say not that.

' The youth who bathes in pleasure's tempting stream
' At well judg'd intervals, feels all his soul
' Nerv'd with recruited strength; but if too oft
' He swims in sportive mazes through the flood,
' It chills his languid virtue. For this cause'
Your Earl forbids, that these enchanting groves
And their fair mistress should possess him wholly.
He knows he has a country and a king,
That claim his first attention; yet be sure,
'Twill not be long, ere his unbending mind
Shall lose in sweet oblivion ev'ry care,
Among th' embow'ring shades that veil Elfrida.

Elf. Oh, be that spech prophetic; may he soon
Seek these embow'ring shades! Meanwhile, my friends,
Sooth me with harmony. I know, full well,
That ye were nurs'd in Cornwall's wizard caves,
And oft have pac'd the fairy peopled vales
Of Devon, where posterity retains
Some vein of that old minstrelsy, which breath'd
Through each time-honour'd grove of British oak.
There, where the spreading consecrated boughs
Fed the sage misletoe, the holy Druids
Lay rapt in moral musings; while the Bards
Call'd from their solemn harps such lofty airs,
As drew down Fancy from the realms of Light
To paint some radiant vision on their minds,

Of high mysterious import. But on me
Such strains sublime were wasted : I but ask
A sprightly song to speed the lazy flight
Of these dull hours. And Music sure can find
A magic spell to make them skim their round,
Swift as the swallow circles. Try its power :
While I, from yonder hillock, watch his coming.

[*Exit Elfrida.*]

ODE.

AIR.

“ The turtle tells her plaintive tale,
“ Sequester’d in some *lonely* vale ;
“ The lark in radiant ether floats,
“ And swells his wild exstatic notes ;
“ Meanwhile on yonder hawthorn spray
“ The linnet wakes her temp’rate lay ;
“ She haunts no solitary shade,
“ She flutters o’er no sun-shine mead,
“ No love-lorn griefs depress her song,
“ No raptures lift it loudly high,
“ But soft she trills, amid th’ aerial throng,
“ Smooth simple strains of sob’rest harmony.”

CHORUS.

“ Sweet bird ! like thine our lay shall flow,
“ Nor gaily brisk, nor sadly slow ;
“ For to thy note sedate, and clear,
“ Content still lends a list’ning ear.
“ Reclin’d this mossy bank along,
“ Oft has she heard thy careless song :
“ Why hears not now ? What fairer grove
“ From Harewood lures her devious love ?

' What fairer grove than Harewood knows,
 ' More woodland walks, more fragrant gales,
 ' More shadowy bowers, inviting soft repose,
 ' More streams slow-wand'ring thro' her winding vales?

' Perhaps to some lone cave the rover flies,
 ' Where lull'd in pious peace the Hermit lies.
 ' For from the hall's tumultuous state,
 ' Where banners wave with blazon'd gold,
 ' There will the meek-ey'd matron oft retreat,
 ' And with the solemn sage high converse hold.

 ' There, Goddess, on the shaggy mound,
 ' Where tumbling torrents roar around,
 ' Where pendant mountains o'er your head
 ' Stretch their reverential shade;
 ' You listen, while the holy Seer
 ' Slowly chaunts his vespers clear;
 ' Or of his sparing mess partake,
 ' The sav'ry pulse, the wheaten cake,
 ' The bev'rage cool of limpid rill.
 ' Then, rising light, your host you bless,
 ' And o'er his saintly temples bland distil
 ' Seraphic day-dreams of heav'n's happiness.'

RECITATIVE.

" Where'er thou art, enchanting Power,
 " Thou soon wilt smile in Harewood's bower:
 " Soon will thy fairy feet be seen,
 " Printing this dew-impearled green;
 " Soon shall we mark thy gestures meek,
 " Thy glitt'ring eye, and dimpled cheek,
 " Among the welcome guests that move
 " Attendant on the state of love.

' There, when the sov'reign leads along
' Of sports and smiles a jocund train,
' Then last, but loveliest of the lovely throng,
' Thou com'st to soften, yet secure his reign.'

AIR.

" And, hark, compleating our prophetic lay,
" The fleet hoof rattles o'er the flinty way ;
" Now nearer, and now nearer sounds."

DUET and CHORUS.

" Avaunt ! ye vain, delusive fears.
" Hark ! Echo tells through Harewood's amplest bounds,
" That Love, Content, and Athelwold appears."

ACT II. SCENE I.

Continues. Enter ATHELWOLD, ELFRIDA, and CHORUS.

Athelwold.

Look ever thus ; with that bright glance of joy
Thus always meet my transports. Let these arms
Thus ever fold me ; and this cheek, that blooms
With all health's opening roses, press my lips,
Warm as at this blest moment.

Elf. Athelwold,
I had prepar'd me many a stern rebuke ;
Had arm'd my brow with frowns, and taught my eye
Th' averted glance of coldness, which might best
Greet such a loit'ring lover : but I find,
'Twas a vain task ; for this my truant heart

Forgets each lesson, which resentment taught,
And in thy sight knows only to be happy.

Athel. My best Elfrida—Heav'ns! it cannot last.
The giddy height of joy, to which I'm lifted,
Is as a hanging rock, at whose low foot
The black and beating surge of Infamy
Rolls ready to receive, and sink my soul.

Elf. So soon to fall into this musing mood—
I thought, my lord, you promis'd you would leave
These looks behind at Court. Nay, 'twas the cause
Assign'd for this my residence at Harewood,
That you might never come to these fond arms,
But with a breast devoid of public care,
And fill'd alone with rapture and Elfrida.
Said you not so? Why then that pensive posture,
That down-cast eye? Surely the city's din
And this calm grove have lost their difference.
I'll with you to the palace.

Athel. Heaven forbid!

Elf. Nay, my best lord, I meant it but in sport;
For should you bid me quit these blooming lawns
For some bare heath, or drear unpeopled desert;
Believe me, I would think its wildness Eden,
If Athelwold, with frequent visitation,
Endear'd the savage scene; but yet I fear
My father.

Athel. Hah! why him?

Elf. You know his temper;
How jealous of his rank, and his trac'd lineage
From royal ancestry. I fear me much,
He will not brook you should conceal me long
In this lone privacy: 'no, he will deem it
'Far unbecoming her, whose veins are fill'd

‘ With the rich stream of his nobility.
 ‘ Should it be so, his hot and fiery nature,
 ‘ I doubt, will blaze, and do some dreadful outrage.’

Athel. He need not know it, or, if chance he should,
 It matters not, if so this forest life
 Seem of your own adoption and free choice.
 And that it will so seem, I trust that love,
 Which ever yet has met my wayward will
 With pleas’d compliance, and unask’d assent.

Elf. And ever shall : yet blame me not, my lord,
 If prying womanhood should prompt a wish
 To learn the cause of this your strange commotion,
 Which ever wakes, if I but drop one thought
 Of quitting Harewood.

Athel. Go to the clear surface
 Of yon unruffled lake, and, bending o’er it,
 There read my answer.

Elf. These are riddles, Sir——

Athel. No ; for its glassy and reflecting surface
 Will smile with charms too tempting for a palace.

Elf. Does Athelwold distrust Elfrida’s faith ?

Athel. No ; but he much distrusts Elfrida’s beauty.

Elf. Away : you trifle.

Athel. Never more in earnest :
 I would not for the throne which Edgar sits on,
 That Edgar should behold it.

Elf. What, my lord,
 Think you the face, that caught your single heart,
 Will make all hearts its captives ? Vain surmise.
 Yet grant it could ; Elfrida’s yours alone :
 Not Edgar’s self would dare to seize it from you.
 Edgar’s a king, and not a tyrant.

Athel. True,

Edgar's a king, a just one; his firm feet
Walk ever in the fore-right road of honour:
Nor do I know what lure can draw his steps
Devious from that straight path, save only one:
That tempting lure is beauty. Ah! Elfrida,
Throw but the dazzling bait within his view,
The untam'd wolf does not with fiercer rage
Burst the slight bondage of the silken net,
Than he the ties of law. 'Late, very late,
' Smit casually with young Matilda's face,
' He straight commanded her reluctant mother
' To yield her to his arms: nor had she 'scap'd
' The violating fervour of his love,
' Had not the prudent dame suborn'd her handmaid
' To take the unchaste office, and be led,
' Veil'd in the mask of night, to Edgar's chamber,
' A counterfeit Matilda. As it chanc'd,
' The damsel pleas'd the king, nor did detection
' A whit abate his fondness; he forgave
' The prudent mother, eas'd Matilda's fears,
' And led the wanton minstrel to his court,
' Where still she shares——'

Enter ALBINA.

Albina. Behold, Earl Athelwold,
A messenger arrives; his speed and aspect
Speak some important errand.

Enter EDWIN.

Athel. How now, Edwin?

Edwin. The king, my lord, is on his way to Harewood.

Athel. The king!

Edwin. His purpose is to pass through Mercia:

And in a hasty message, some two hours
 After you left the palace, this his pleasure
 Was sent you by Lord Seofrid ; withal
 Commanding your attendance. You being absent,
 He straightway turn'd his course thro' this fair forest,
 Meaning to chace the stag ; his train is small,
 As was his purpose sudden.

Elf. Good, my lord,
 Why thus perplex'd ?

Albina. Heav'ns ! what a deep despair
 Sits on his brow !

Elf. The notice sure is short ;
 But that's a trifle ; a small train requires
 The smaller preparation : let him come.

Athel. Yes, let him come : so thou wilt say, Elfrida,
 When thou hast heard my tale. Yes, let him come :—
 So wilt thou say, and let thy husband perish.
 Yet shall these arms once more embrace thee closely,
 Ere yet thou fly them as the pois'nous adder.
 'Tis o'er ; in that embrace Elfrida's love
 Was buried ; and in that embrace, the peace
 Of wretched Athelwold.

Elf. What may this be !

Athel. Oh Edwin, Edwin ! when surviving Malice
 Shall prey upon the fame of thy dead master,
 Wilt thou not some way strive to check the Fiend's
 Insatiate fury ? Wilt thou see my name
 Defil'd and blacken'd with Detraction's venom,
 And bear it patiently ?

Elf. What means my best—

Athel. Peace ; not a word of best, or lov'd, or dear :
 These are not titles now for thee to use,
 Or me to triumph in. Virgins, retire :

We would a while be private. Nay, return.
Concealment would be vain; and ye and Edwin
Are bound to me. 'Albina! as for you,
'I sav'd your father when his blood was forfeit.'

Albina. Not I, great Earl, alone, but all this train
Are bound by ev'ry tie of faith and love
To gen'rous Athelwold; to that mild master,
Who never forc'd our service to one act,
But of such liberal sort, as Freedom's self
Would smilingly perform.

Athel. It may be so.
But where's the tie, Elfrida, that may bind
Thy faith and love?

Elf. The strongest sure, my lord,
The golden, nuptial tie. Try but its strength.

Athel. I must perforce this instant. Know, Elfrida,
Once, on a day of high festivity,
The youthful king, encircled with his nobles,
Crown'd high the sparkling bowl; and much of love,
Of beauty much the sprightly converse ran;
When, as it well might chance, the gay Lord Ardulph
Made gallant note of Orgar's peerless daughter,
And in such phrase as might enflame a breast
More cool than Edgar's. Early on the morrow
Th' impatient Monarch gave me swift commission
To view those charms, of which Lord Ardulph's tongue
Had given such warm description: to whose words
If my impartial eye gave full assent,
I had his royal mandate on the instant
To hail you Queen of England.

Elf. 'Stead of which
You came, and hail'd me wife of Athelwold.
Was this the tale I was so taught to fear?

Was this the deed, that, known, would make me fly
 Thy clasping arm, as 'twere the pois'nous adder?
 No, let this tender, fond embrace assure thee,
 That thy Elfrida's love can never die;
 'Or, if it could, this animating touch
 'Would soon rewake it into life and rapture.'

Athel. Dost thou then pardon me? Come, injur'd sov'-
 reign,
 Plunge deep thy sword of justice in this breast,
 And I will die contented.

Elf. Heav'n forbid!
 What can be done?

Albina. Indeed, ye constant pair,
 'Tis fit ye strive to fly the coming danger.
 For safety now sits wav'ring on your love,
 Like the light down upon the thistle's beard,
 Which ev'ry breeze may part. Say, noble Earl,
 What feint was us'd to lull the king's impatience?

Athel. Soon as these shades had veil'd my beauteous
 bride,
 I hasted back to Edgar, laugh'd at Ardulph,
 And talk'd of Elfrid, as of vulgar beauties;
 'Own'd no uncommon light'ning in her eye,
 'No breast that sham'd the snow, or cheek the rose.'
 The sprightly king believ'd me, and forgot her.

Albina. But an alliance, great as Athelwold's
 With Orgar's daughter, soon would blaze abroad,
 The theme of popular converse.

Athel. True, it would;
 And for that reason, when I last was here,
 The king was taught I went to wed Elfrida.

Elf. How so, my lord?

Athel. Thy father, my Elfrida,

Has rich possessions : these, and these alone,
I made my theme of love ; and told the king,
That tho' thy face (pardon the impious falsehood)
Boasted not charms to grace a Monarch's throne,
Yet would thy dower well suit his minister.
I therefore meant to ask thee of thy father,
And, (that my want of skill in choice might 'scape
All censure) hide thee close in Harewood castle.
Edgar with smiles consented, and, I think,
Harbours no thought of my disloyalty.

Elf. If so, what danger now ?

Atbel. Ask'st thou, what danger ?

'Sdeath, will that glance not instantly proclaim
My tenfold treachery ?

Elf. He shall not see me.

I'll hide me instant in some secret chamber,
And robe this virgin in my bridal vestments.

Atbel. Thy love, like balm, runs trick'ling o'er the
wounds

Of my torn bosom ; yet 'tis vain, 'tis vain :
Thou must thyself appear, for Arduiph ever
Attends the king, and would detect the fraud.

Elf. If so, yet still I can insure our safety ;
For as you fear my softness of complexion,
I'll stain it with the juice of dusky leaves,
Or yellow berries, which this various wood
From tree or shrub will yield me. These I'll use,
And form a thousand methods to conceal
The little gleams of grace, which nature lent me.
Fear not my caution.

Atbel. Gentlest, best of creatures,
Go, do then as thy tender care directs.
And yet how vain ? What wondrous art can steal

The liquid lightnings from those radiant eyes,
Or rob the wavy ringlets of that hair
Of all their nameless graces? Say it could,
Yet would that modest, but majestic mien,
That inborn dignity of soul, which breathes
Through each angelic gesture, still remain
To seize the heart of Edgar. Rest, Elfrida,
Rest as thou art, in all that blaze of beauty :
I must submit to my just lot, and lose thee.

Elf. Away, my lord, with these too anxious scruples :
' Fear not my carriage ; I will stoop my head,
' Drawl out an idiot phrase, and do each act
' With ev'n a rude and peasant aukwardness.'

Edwin. Ere this, my lord, I think the king has reach'd
The full mid-way ; 'twere fit you stood prepar'd
To give him meeting.

Athel. Give him meeting, Edwin !
Alas ! I have no mask to veil my baseness.
When deep contrition shadows all my soul,
I cannot dress my features in light smiles,
And look the thing I am not. No, these eyes
Are not as yet true vassals to my purpose,
As yet indeed I am but half a villain.

Elf. You weigh this matter in too nice a balance.
Your crime, my lord, is but the crime of love :
Thousands like you have fail'd.

Athel. I know, Elfrida,
Could love absolve the crime, my soul were pure
As maiden-innocence. Yes, I do love thee,
And thou art fair—beyond—But that's my bane ;
Thy ev'ry charm adds weight to my offence,
And heaps fresh wrongs upon the best of masters :
Yes, Elfrid, Edgar was the best of masters.

Oh hide me from the thought in that dear bosom —
Heav'ns ! I must die or keep her.

Elf. Live, or die,
I'm thine alike. Death cannot aught abate,
Or life augment, my love. Let this embrace
Be witness of my truth.

Athel. It shall, it shall :
Thy ev'ry word and look declares thee faithful,
Secure of all thy love, and all thy prudence,
Returning confidence has arm'd my soul
For this dread meeting : resting on thy truth
I go—— [Exit Athelwold.

ELFRIDA and EDWIN.

Elf. Go, and thy guardian saint preserve thee,
Show'r blessings vast as would my lavish love,
Had I his power to bless thee.

Albina. Yes, my sisters,
' The silent awe that reigns through all your train,
' Befits ye well. Let admiration first
' Pay her mute tribute. She can best express,
' By those her kindling cheeks, and lifted eyes,
' Where the tear twinkles, that transcendent praise
' Elfrida's virtue claims.

Elf. My virtue, Virgins,
' Is only love. Or, say that it be virtue,
' It owes its source to love, to chastest love,
' Than which what passion more impels the mind
' To fair and gen'rous action?' But the hours
Are precious now. I'll to yon neighb'ring grove :
There grows an azure flow'r, I oft have mark'd it,
Which stains the pressing finger with a juice
Of dusky, yellow tinct : its name I know not.
I'll fetch and try it straight. Wait my return. [Exit Elfrida.

ODE.—RECITATIVE.

ALBINA.

“ Whence does this sudden lustre rise,
 “ That gilds the grove? Not like the noontide beam,
 “ Which sparkling dances on the trembling stream,
 “ Nor the blue lightning’s flash swift-shooting thro’ the skies.
 “ But such a solemn steady light,
 “ As o’er the cloudless azure steals,
 “ When Cynthia, riding on the brow of night,
 “ Stops in the mid career her silver wheels.”

CHORUS.

“ Whence can it rise, but from the sober power
 “ Of Constancy? She, heav’n-born queen,
 “ Descends, and here in Harewood’s hallow’d bow’r
 “ Fixes her stedfast reign:
 “ Stedfast, as when her high command
 Gives to the starry band
 “ Their radiant stations in heav’n’s ample plain.
 “ Stedfast, as when around this nether sphere,
 “ She winds the purple year:”

DUET.

“ Tells what time the snow-drop cold
 “ Its maiden whiteness may unfold,
 “ When the golden harvest bend,
 “ When the ruddy fruits descend.”

CHORUS.

“ Then bids pale Winter wake, to pour
 “ The pearly hail’s translucent show’r,

“ To cast his silv’ry mantle o’er the woods,
 “ And bind in crystal chains the slumb’ring floods.

‘ The soul, which she inspires, has pow’r to climb
 ‘ To all the heights sublime
 ‘ Of Virtue’s tow’ring hill ;
 ‘ That hill, at whose low foot weak-warbling strays
 ‘ The scanty stream of human praise,
 ‘ A shallow trickling rill.
 ‘ While on the summits hov’ring angels shed,
 ‘ From their blest pinions, the nectareous dews
 ‘ Of rich immortal Fame : from these the Muse
 ‘ Oft steals some precious drops, and skilful blends
 ‘ With those the lower fountain lends ;
 ‘ Then show’rs it all on some high-favour’d head.
 ‘ But thou, Elfrida, claims’t the genuine dew ;
 ‘ Thy worth demands it all.
 ‘ Pure, and unmixt, on thee the holy drops shall fall.’

ACT III. SCENE I.

*Continues. Enter ELFRIDA, ORGAR, ALBINA, and
 attendant Ladies.*

Elfrida [Looking on the flower.]

’Tis strange, my Virgins, this sweet child of Summer,
 Silken and soft, whose breath perfumes the air,
 Whose gay vest paints the morn, should in its bosom
 Hide such pollution ? Yet ’tis often thus :
 All are not as they seem.

Orgar. Yet hear me, lady.

Elf. Be gone, unmanner’d stranger, nor pursue me ;

Hence, from the grove. Know ye this Pilgrim, Virgins?
On my return I met him here.

Albina. Alas!

We saw him here before, and heard his tale,
That mov'd our pity—But I fear me now,
'Twas false; some spy perchance, and may have heard—

Orgar. I have; yet not for that are you betray'd.
Fair Excellence, my heart is bound unto you,
I feel a tender interest in your welfare,
Tender as fathers feel.

Elf. As fathers feel!

That well-known voice, and ah! that look——

Orgar. Elfrida!

Elf. Yes, it is he, it is my Father, Virgins.
Support me, or I faint! Oh wherefore, Sir?——

Orgar. Take courage, daughter; my parental fondness
Prompted this visit. Thus I came disguis'd,
To learn the cause of my dear child's confinement:

' And I have learnt it.

' *Elf.* Then all's lost for ever.

' *Orgar.* Thou know'st, Elfrida, next my house's honour,
' Thy peace has ever been my dearest care.'

But such an insult!—No: I cannot brook it.

So black a fraud! By all my ancestors,
By Belin's shade I will have ample vengeance.

Elf. Alas, I know too well your dreadful purpose.

I knew it at the first. Yes, he must fall.

Yet pardon me, if my poor trembling heart
Puts up I know not what of pray'rs and vows

To ev'ry pitying saint. Celestial guardians
Of nuptial constancy! Oh bend from heav'n

Your star-crown'd heads, and hear a wretched woman,

That begs ye save, from a dread father's rage,
Her lord, her husband.

Orgar. Husband! 'Sdeath, what husband?
Is Athelwold thy husband? ' Sooner call
' Th' impeached thief true master of the booty
' He stole, or murder'd for.' Disdain the villain;
And help me to revenge thee.

Albina. Think, great Earl;
What sanctimonious ties restrain your daughter.
Did she not swear before the hallow'd shrine
Eternal fealty to this her lord?
Yet say, that he deceiv'd her; shall her truth
Dare to revenge? No, Sir, in highest heav'n
Vengeance 'mid storms and tempests sits enshrin'd,
Vested in robes of light'ning, and there sleeps,
Unwak'd but by th' incens'd Almighty's call.
Oh! let not man presume to take unbid
That dread vicegerency.

Orgar. Peace, Virgins, peace.
Not ev'n the saws of Druids or of Bards
Have weight with me, when insults high as this
Rouse my just indignation. Hear me, daughter,
You went to search for flow'rs, to blot your charms
With their dun hue. Yes, thou shalt search for flow'rs,
Yet shall they be the loveliest of the spring;
Flow'rs, that entangling in thine auburn hair,
Or blushing 'mid the whiteness of thy bosom,
May, to the power of ev'ry native grace,
Give double life and lustre. ' Haste, my child,
' Array thyself in thy most gorgeous garb,
' And see each jewel, which my love procur'd thee,
' Dart its full radiance.' More than all, put on

The nobler ornament of winning smiles,
And kind inviting glances.

Elf. Never, never;
When this true heart renounces Athelwold,
May equitable heav'n—

Orgar. Away with vows;
And 'with a duteous, and attentive ear,'
Listen to my persuasions. 'Much I wish
'Persuasions might prevail,' that not compell'd
To use a father's just prerogative,
My will may meet with thy unforc'd obedience.
Follow me, on thy duty.

Elf. Cruel father,
That duty shall obey you; I will follow:
Yet dread as is that frown, dreadful as death,
It shall not shake the tenor of my faith;
Living or dead I still am Athelwold's.

[*Exeunt Orgar and Elfrida.*]

Albina. Horror! horror!
'The pen of Fate, dipt in its deepest gall,
'Perhaps on that ill-omen'd wall
'Now writes th' event of this tremendous day.
'Oh! that our weaker sight
'Could read the mystic characters, and spy
'What to the unpurg'd mortal eye
'Is hid in endless night.'

RECITATIVE.

"Suspense! thou frozen guest, be gone.
"The wretch, whose rugged bed
"Is spread on thorns, more softly rests his head,
"Than he that sinks amid the cygnet's down."

CHORUS.

“ If thou, tormenting fiend, be nigh,
“ To prompt his starting tear, his ceaseless sigh,
“ His wish, his pray’r, his vow for ling’ring certainty.”

[*Horn sounds.*

Albina. But hark! that certainty arrives. Methought
I heard the winding horn. ‘ I did not err;’ [*Horn again.*
The King is near at hand. ‘ This quick approach
‘ Will sure prevent this proud Earl’s cruel purpose.
‘ Yet what of that? Does her fair form require
‘ The blazon of rich vesture? Genuine beauty
‘ Nor asks, nor needs it: negligence alone
‘ Is its bright diadem, and artless ease
‘ Its robe of Tyrian tincture.’ Say, my sisters,
Shall we salute this monarch with a hymn
‘ Of festival and joy! Alas, such joy
Ill suits our trembling hearts, and weeping eyes.
And now ’twere vain: for see, the King approaches.

Enter EDGAR, ATHELWOLD, and Lords.

Edgar. No, Athelwold; not from a partial blindness,
Or for the mode and guise of courtesy,
Are we thus large in praise; in our true judgment,
This castle is not more kind Nature’s debtor
For its delicious site, than ’tis to thee
For this so goodly structure. From its base,
Ev’n to yon turrets trim, and taper spires,
All is of choicest Masonry. Each part
Doth boast a separate grace; but ornament,
Tho’ here the richest that the eye can note,
Is us’d, not lavish’d; art seems generous here,
Yet not a prodigal. But ah! my Earl, [*Seeing the Chorus.*

What living charms are here? Thy castle's beauty
Must not detain me from this lovelier prospect.
Your pardon, fair ones, that my wayward eye
Paid not at first, where first was surely due,
Its homage to your graces.

Athel. Heavens! they weep.

What may this mean? Some dread and unseen chance
Has counter-work'd my safety.

Edgar. Whence this silence;

Why are your lovely heads thus bow'd with sadness?
Beshrew my heart, my lord, but this is strange.
I know thee, Earl, and know thy gentleness,
More prone t' obey, than lord it o'er the sex;
Else should I guess this sorrow had its rise
From some discourteous treatment.

Albina. No, dread Sov'reign;

He is the noblest, gentlest, best of masters;
And may your love reward——

Enter ORGAR.

Athel. Death to my hopes!

Orgar. Yes, villain, start; but let this vengeful arm
Arrest thy baseness; would to heav'n its strength,
Thus grasping thee, could open thy false breast,
And bear thy heart to the sham'd eye of day.

Edgar. Patience, hot man. What art thou?

Orgar. Earl of Devon!

Pardon me, Prince; that this my honest rage
O'erleaps obedient duty. I am wrong'd,
Yet that's but small; for know, much injur'd Prince,
Thy wrongs as well as mine both call for justice.
Yes, sir, I here, on a true subject's oath,
Proclaim Earl Athelwold a faithless traitor.

Edgar. Ha! what is this? Renounce the word, old Earl;
Thy length of years hath forc'd thee, sure, to press
The verge of dotage. Athelwold! What Athelwold
A faithless traitor! Perish the suspicion.
Never before did word, or thought, or look,
Give doubt of his distinguish'd loyalty.
Dotage alone could frame the accusation.

Orgar. I do not dote, thank Heav'n, my faculties
Are yet my own, unblemish'd and unhurt.
Would so my daughter were!

Edgar. What is his drift?

Athel. Better, my royal Lord, you mark'd him not;
The wayward Earl is——

Orgar. What, audacious villain!
I will be heard.

Edgar. Go to, thou choleric Lord.

Orgar. When thou hast heard me, Edgar, call me choleric.

Edgar. Speak then, and briefly.

Orgar. Once, my sacred liege,
I had a daughter, duteous as e'er crown'd
A father's wish, and lovely as could warm
A youth to am'rous transports. This, my Lord,
You learnt long since from noble Ardulph's praises,
And fir'd with his description, sent this Earl,
This faithful Earl, t' invite her to your throne.

Edgar. No, Orgar, not t' invite her to your throne,
Simply to note her beauty was his errand.

Orgar. Yes, he did note it, stamp't it for his own.
But why this parley? Enter, Sir, these gates,
And let Elfrida's features be the book,
Where you may read the story of his falsehood,
Ev'n on the instant.

Edgar. Noble Lord, lead on.

[To Athelwold.]

We'll follow to the trial. I will humour
The Earl's hot temper. He has heard, my friend,
We meant t' exalt his daughter, and for that
His partial fondness, link'd with his ambition,
Levels this rage at thee. Attend us, Lords.

[*Exeunt* Edgar, Orgar, &c.]

Albina. My Lord, the King is enter'd : stand not thus
In mute ' and fixt' distress.

Athel. Away, away;
How can a man that thinks such thoughts as I do,
Have pow'r of word or motion? Speak to me;
Inform me all. What said she, when I left her?
How came her father hither? How did she
Greet his arrival? Say, was she compell'd,
Or did her free, and voluntary voice,
Tell all the story? Did she marshal him
To this his deed of vengeance?

Albina. Dearest Master;
Elfrida told him not : his own deceit
Was his informer. Here the Earl arriv'd
At break of day, in mean and pilgrim weeds,
All like an ancient, toil-worn traveller;
And with a tale told in such piteous strain,
Fraught with such sad and moving circumstance,
With woes so well dissembl'd; that our softness
Suffer'd him enter yon close bow'r for rest,
Where he, as was no doubt his settl'd purpose,
O'erheard the secret. This our disobedience,
We own——

Athel. Was my perdition. Yet 'tis well;
I blame ye not; it was Heav'n's justice, Virgins;
This brought him hither; this annull'd your faith.
I do not think, you purpos'd my destruction;

But yet you have destroy'd me. O Elfrida,
 And art thou faithful? This my jealous eye
 Thought it had mark'd some speck of change upon thee;
 Thought it had found, what might have made thy loss
 Somewhat within endurance. 'Tis not so;
 And this thy purity but serves t' augment
 'The sum of my distractions. Meet me, Edgar,
 With thy rais'd sword: be merciful and sudden——

[Exit Athelwold.

ODE.

ALBINA.

Say, will no white-rob'd Son of Light,
 Swift-darting from his heav'nly height,
 Here deign to take his hallow'd stand;
 Here wave his amber locks; unfold
 His pinions cloth'd with downy gold;
 Here smiling stretch his tutelary wand?

RECITATIVE.

“ And you, ye host of saints, for ye have known
 “ Each dreary path in life's perplexing maze,
 “ Tho' now ye circle yon eternal throne
 “ With harpings high of inexpressive praise,
 “ Will not your train descend in radiant state,
 “ To break with Mercy's beam this gath'ring cloud of Fate?”

DUET and CHORUS.

“ 'Tis silence all. No Son of Light
 “ Darts swiftly from his heav'nly height;
 “ No train of radiant Saints descend.
 “ Mortals, in vain ye hope to find,
 “ If guilt, if fraud has stain'd your mind,
 “ Or saint to hear, or angel to defend.”

- ‘ So Truth proclaims. I hear the sacred sound
- ‘ Burst from the centre of her burning throne :
- ‘ Where aye she sits with star-wreath’d lustre crown’d :
- ‘ A bright sun clasps her adamantine zone.
- ‘ So Truth proclaims : her awful voice I hear :
- ‘ With many a solemn pause it slowly meets my ear.

- ‘ Attend, ye sons of men ; attend, and say,
- ‘ Does not enough of my refulgent ray
- ‘ Break through the veil of your mortality !
- ‘ Say, does not reason in this form descry
- ‘ Unnumber’d, nameless glories, that surpass
- ‘ The Angel’s floating pomp, the Seraph’s glowing grace ?

- ‘ Shall then your earth-born daughters vie
- ‘ With me ? Shall she, whose brightest eye
- ‘ But emulates the diamond’s blaze,
- ‘ Whose cheek but mocks the peach’s bloom,
- ‘ Whose breath the hyacinth’s perfume,
- ‘ Whose melting voice the warbling woodlark’s lays,
- ‘ Shall she be deem’d my rival ? Shall a form
- ‘ Of elemental dross, of mould’ring clay,
- ‘ Vie with these charms imperial ? The poor worm
- ‘ Shall prove her contest vain. Life’s little day
- ‘ Shall pass, and she is gone : while I appear
- ‘ Flush’d with the bloom of youth thro’ Heav’n’s eternal year.

- ‘ Know, mortals, know, ere first ye sprung,
- ‘ Ere first these orbs in Ether hung,
- ‘ I shone amid the heav’nly throng.
- ‘ These eyes beheld Creation’s day,
- ‘ This voice began the choral lay,
- ‘ And taught Archangels their triumphant song.

' Pleas'd I survey'd bright Nature's gradual birth,
 ' Saw infant Light with kindling lustre spread,
 ' Soft vernal fragrance clothe the flow'ring earth,
 ' And Ocean heave on his extended bed;
 ' Saw the tall pine aspiring pierce the sky,
 ' The tawny lion stalk, the rapid eagle fly.
 ' Last, Man arose, erect in youthful grace,
 ' Heav'n's hallow'd image stamp't upon his face,
 ' And as he rose, the high behest was giv'n,
 ' That I alone, of all the host of heav'n,
 ' Should reign Protectress of the godlike youth.'
 ' Thus the Almighty spake: he spake and call'd me Truth.'

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Continues. Enter ATHELWOLD, EDWIN, and ALBINA.

Athelwold.

BANISH me! No. I'll die. For why should life
 Remain a lonely lodger in that breast,
 Which Honour leaves deserted? Idle breath!
 Thou can'st not fill such vacancy. Be gone!
 This sword shall free——

Albina. Oh shame to fortitude!
 Shame to that manly passion, which inspires
 Its vigorous warmth, when the bleak blasts of Fate
 Would chill the soul! Oh call the ready Virtue
 Quick to thy aid, for she is ever near thee;
 Is ever prompt to spread her sevenfold shield
 O'er noble breasts!

Athel. And but o'er noble breasts;
 Not o'er the breast, which livid Infamy

Indelibly has spotted. Oh shame, shame!
Sword, rid me of the thought.

Albina. Forbear, forbear;

Think what a sea of deep perdition whelms
The wretch's trembling soul, who launches forth
Unlicens'd to eternity. Think, think;
And let the thought restrain thy impious hand.
The race of man is one vast marshall'd army,
Summon'd to pass the spacious realms of Time,
Their leader the Almighty. 'In that march
' Ah who may quit his post? when' high in air
The chos'n Archangel rides, whose right hand wields
Th' imperial standard of Heav'n's providence,
Which, dreadly sweeping through the vaulted sky,
O'ershadows all creation.

Athel. I was once——

Yes, I was once (I have his royal word for't)
A man of such try'd faith, such steady honour,
As mock'd all doubt and scruple.—What a change!
Now must that unstain'd, virgin character,
Be doom'd to gross and hourly prostitution,
Sating the lust of Slander; and my wife,
My chaste Elfrida! O distraction! no,
I'll fly to save her.

Edwin. Stay, my dearest master;
You rush on instant death.

Athel. I mean it, slave,
And would'st thou hinder me?

Edwin. Yes, Sir, I hold
'Tis duty to my King, and love to you,
Thus to oppose your entrance.

Athel. What, thou traitor!——

Thy pardon, Edwin, I forgot myself;

Forgot, that I stood here a banish'd man;
And that this gate was shut against its master.
And yet this gate leads to my dear Elfrida;
Can it be barr'd to me? Oh earth, cold earth,
Upon whose breast I cast this load of mis'ry,
Bear it a while! and you, ye aged oaks,
Ye venerable fathers of this wood,
Who oft have cool'd beneath your arching shades
My humble ancestors, oft seen them hie
To your spread umbrage, from yon sultry field,
Their scene of honest labour, shade, ah! shade
The last, the wretchedest of all their race!
I will not long pollute ye; for I mean
To pay beneath your consecrated gloom
A sacrifice to honour, and the ghosts
Of those progenitors, who sternly frown
On me, their base descendant.

Edwin. See, Albina,
How horror shades his brow; how fixt his eye;
Heav'ns! what despair——

Albina. Edwin, 'tis ever thus
With noble minds, if chance they slide to folly;
Remorse stings deeper, and relentless Conscience
Pours more of gall into the bitter cup
Of their severe repentance.

Athel. 'Tis resolv'd:
I'll enter and demand a second audience.
And yet how vain! Ere I can reach his ear,
His ready train will stop me, and, with all
The cruel punctuality of office,
So prompt to act 'gainst fallen favourites,
Dismiss me with reproof.—Surely I heard her.

Elf. [*Speaks within.*] No, I will once more clasp him in
my arms.

Athel. Was't not Elfrida's voice? 'Tis she herself.

Enter ELFRIDA, EDGAR, ATHELWOLD, and Attendants.

Elf. I will not be withheld. I will o'ertake him,
Will go with him to exile. Hah, my husband!
So quickly found! They thought to tear me from thee;
But we will part no more.

Edgar. Take heed, Elfrida,
This ill-tim'd fondness may recal the fate
I just now freed him from; who loves like me
Can ill brook this. Or quit him, or he dies.

Athel. Yes, let me die! Death is my dearest wish.
Quit me, Elfrida! leave me to my fate.
'Tis just, 'tis just. Thus to my Sov'reign's sword
Freely I bare my breast. Strike, injur'd Prince;
But do not banish me.

Elf. What, Athelwold,
Is then the life, on whose dear preservation
Elfrida's peace depends, not worth the saving?
Die then. But ere thy murd'rer strikes the stroke,
Let me inform him, that his act destroys
No single life.

Edgar. By heav'n, she loves the traitor
Beyond all hope of change——

Elf. No, Athelwold,
Thou shalt not die. That pause in royal Edgar
Bespeaks forgiveness. ' He will soon relent;
' And mercy, flowing from his gracious tongue,
' Seal thy full pardon. Let us kneel, my Lord;
' Seize the important moment; kneel together;
' And as these streaming eyes and lifted hands
' Employ each act of silent supplication,

' Do thou recount—Ah! no, thy modest tongue
' Could never tell ev'n half the gallant story.
' Be silent then. Let Edgar's self reflect;
' For well I know his mem'ry writes thy virtues
' Upon its fairest page.' Yes, let him weigh
All thy past deeds of loyalty and faith
'Gainst this so light a fault.

Edgar. So light a fault!

Had he dislodg'd my richest coffer'd treasures,
' Dispers'd sedition's poison 'mid my troops,'
Or aim'd with daring and rebellious hand
To snatch these regal honours from my brow,
I sooner could have pardon'd.

Athel. Cease, Elfrida.

My doom is just—Yes, royal Sir, I go
To banishment. I do deserve to breathe,
Deserve to bear this load of life about me,
For many years; to lengthen out my age,
List'ning the hourly knell of curst remembrance,
Whose leaden stroke shall tell to my sad soul
That I was faithful once.

Elf. Oh flinty Edgar!

What! will this penitence not move thee? Know
There is a rose-lip'd Seraph sits on high,
Who ever bends his holy ear to earth
To mark the voice of Penitence, to catch
Her solemn sighs, to tune them to his harp,
And echo them in harmonies divine
Up to the throne of Grace. Ev'n Heav'n is won
By Penitence, and shall Heav'n's substitute,
Shall Edgar scorn—

Edgar. Cease, cease, thou beauteous pleader!
Ah far too beauteous! Would'st thou gain thy suit,

Why glows that vermil lip? why rolls that eye
Bright as the ray of Morn? Why in each gesture
Such inexpressive graces, but because
They're native all, and will not be conceal'd?
'Else sure each charm betrays him, and becomes
An advocate, whose silent eloquence
'Pleads 'gainst thy voice, and foils its tuneful power.'
Traitor! was this the face which thy false tongue
Profan'd as vulgar? This such common beauty
As the fair eye of day beheld each hour
In ev'ry clime he lighted? Base dissembler,
This instant quit our realm.

Elf. Oh stay thee, Edgar,
And once more hear me! At thy feet I fall,
As earnest and distress a suppliant
As e'er embrac'd the knees of Majesty.
Oh! spare thy Country's guardian, Edgar! spare
Thy closest, surest friend! Let not one fault
Cancel his thousand, thousand acts of faith.
Alas! I fall to vainest repetition.
Grief, whelming grief drowns all my faculties,
And leaves me nought but tears.

Edgar. Rise, rise, Elfrida.

Elf. Shall he then live?

Edgar. He shall, he shall, my fair.
If so he quit the realm within the space
Our sentence limited.

Elf. Oh stop not there!
That sentence will be death to Athelwold.
Think, for thou know'st full well his gentle nature,
Can he support the rigour of this doom?
Can he, who liv'd but in thy gracious smiles,
Who'd pine, if chance those smiles, a single hour,

Were dealt him thriftily; think, can he bear
The infamy of exile?

Edgar. Hear me, Athelwold.

Did I not show'r on thy much-favour'd head
My thickest honours, and with gift so ready,
As out-run all request? Did I not hold thee
Still in such open confidence of friendship,
Such love as——

Athel. Sooner stab me than repeat it.

Edgar. Yet give me hearing. I repeat not this
To taunt or gall thee. On my soul thy worth
Did o'ertop all those honours, and thy zeal
Kept pace with my best love. Nor, till this deed—
But such a deed! look there, look on that face,
Thou know'st me, Athelwold, hast seen me gaze
On a soft-yielding fair one, till mine eye
Shot flames. Perdition seize me, if this heart
Knew love till now.

Athel. I see it plainly, 'my Liege,'
Nor say I ought to lessen my offence.
No, here I kneel—Oh! cast but on my mis'ry
One kind forgiving glance, this ready sword
Shall expiate all.

Elf. Ah! will you? must he die?

Edgar. No, stay thee, Athelwold, and sheath thy sword;
I never yet (save but this hour of rage)
Deem'd thee my subject; thou wert still my friend;
And injur'd as I am, thou still art such:
I do forego the word; to banish thee
Or seal thy death, transcends a friend's just right.

Elf. Ah gen'rous deed! ah godlike goodness! Virgins,
The King will pardon him. Wake each high note
Of praise and gratitude, teach Edgar's name

To Harewood's furthest Echo. Oh my Sov'reign!
What words can speak my thanks——

Edgar. Nay, check these transports,
Lest, if I see thee thus, my soul forget
Its milder purpose. I will leave thee, Lady;
Yet first my lips must press this gentle hand,
And breathe one soft sigh of no common fervour.
Now on, my Lords—Fair wonder of thy sex,
Adieu. We'll straight unto our realm of Mercia.
Yet first, as was our purpose, through this forest
We'll chace the nimble roebuck; may the sport
More please us than we hope. Earl Athelwold,
Thou too must join our train. Follow us straight.

[*Exit Edgar, &c.*

Athel. I do, my Liege. Elfrida, I have much
For thy lov'd ear, and have but one farewell
To tell it all—And yet—

Elf. Ah! loiter not,
It may enrage. Farewel. Be sure, take heed
I come not in your talk; 'avoid ev'n thinking;
'Check ev'n the sighs of absence.' Haste, my Earl,
Oh haste thee, as thou lov'st thy constant wife.

[*Exit Athelwold*

Enter ORGAR.

Orgar. Thy constant wife! ah, stain of all thy race,
Degen'rate girl! 'Henceforth be Orgar deem'd
'Of soft, and dove-like temper, who could see
'A child of his stoop to such vile abasement,
'And yet forebore just wrath; forebore to draw
'That blood she had defil'd from her mean veins.
'But sure thou art not mine! some Elf or Fay
'Did spirit away my babe, and by curst charms

‘Thee in her cradle plac’d.’ Nay, hang not on me.
Dry, dry thy tears, they’ve done their office amply.
Edgar has pardon’d him. No, by my Earldom,
I cannot think of Majesty thus meanly.
He’ll yet avenge it: What if chance he should not?
That stops not me; I have a heart, an arm,
A sword can do me justice.

Elf. Ah! my Lord,
Are you still merciless? Alas, I hop’d—

Orgar. What could’st thou hope, Elfrida? ‘Could’st thou
think

‘I e’er would pardon his vile perfidy,
‘Or thy ignoble softness?
‘*Elf.* Dearest father,
‘Frown not thus sternly on me. I would fain
‘Touch your relenting soul, fain win your heart
‘To fatherly forgiveness. For through life
‘I’ve oft had pleasing proof how that forgiveness
‘Stoop’d to my fond persuasion. But I fear
‘Persuasion now has left me. My sad thoughts
‘Are all on wing, all following Athelwold,
‘Like unseen ministring spirits:—Pardon, Sir,
‘That frown shall check me, I’ll not mention him;
‘I will but plead for my own weakness, plead
‘For that soft sympathy of soul, which you
‘Deem base and servile. Base perhaps it might be,
‘Were I of bolder sex. But I, alas!—
‘Ah! pardon me, if Nature stamp’t me Woman;
‘Gave me a heart soft, gentle, prone to pity,
‘And very fearful. Fearful, sure with cause
‘At this dread hour, when, if one hapless word,
‘One sigh break forth unbid, it may rekindle
‘The Monarch’s rage—What has my phrensy said?

‘ I’ve wander’d from my meaning. Dearest Virgins,
‘ My rash tongue more inflames him. Oh ! assist me,
‘ Ye are not thus opprest with inward horror:
‘ Kneel, plead, persuade, convince——

‘ *Albina.* Alas, my mistress !

‘ What may a servant’s accents do t’ appease
‘ This furious Earl ?

‘ *Orgar.* Ye well may spare them : Maidens,
Know my firm soul’s resolv’d, and be my heart
As base as Athelwold’s, if it foregoes
The honest resolution. ‘ Think what I,
‘ What Britain suffers from this traitor’s fraud :
‘ Had Edgar took my daughter to his bed,
‘ Our British line, which now is doom’d to sink
‘ In vile subjection, had again assum’d
‘ The pall of royalty, with half its power,
‘ In time perchance the whole. But this false Saxon
‘ Shall with his life repay me.’ Here I’ll wait
His first return, and in his own domain
Give him fair combat. ‘ I have known the time
‘ When this good arm had hardihood enough
‘ For thrice his prowess. What is lost through age
‘ My just cause shall supply ;’ and he shall fall
As did the traitor Oswald, whose bold tongue
Defam’d me to King Athelstan : to the ground
My sharp lance nail’d the caitiff.

[Exit Orgar.]

Elf. Think, my Lord,
Will Athelwold, will he enter those lists,
Where conquest would be parricide ? Alas,
He hears me not ! Go, then, obdurate man !
A daughter’s tears will but the more provoke thee.
I will not follow him. No, poor Elfrida !

All thou can'st do is here to wander and weep,
And feel that thou art wretched. [*Throws herself on a bank.*]

RECITATIVE.

"Attend, ye sons of men! attend, and say,*
"Does not Truth's refulgent ray
"Break through the veil of your mortality?
"Say, does not reason in her form descry
"Nameless glories that surpass
"The Angel's pomp, the Seraph's grace?"

AIR.

"Know, mortals, know, ere first ye sprung,
"Ere first these orbs in Ether hung,
"Truth shone amid the heav'nly throng:
"Her eyes beheld Creation's day,
"Her voice began the choral lay,
"And taught Archangels their triumphant song.

"Pleas'd, she survey'd bright Nature's gradual birth,
"Saw infant light, with kindling lustre spread,
"Soft fragrance clothe the flow'ring earth,
"And Ocean heave on his extended bed."

DUET and CHORUS.

"Last Man arose! the high behest was giv'n
"That she alone, of all the host of Heav'n,
"Should reign Protectress of the royal youth.
"Thus the Almighty spoke, and call'd her Truth."

* The following passages, though a repetition of part of the Ode at the conclusion of Act III. are inserted afresh, because there they were omitted in representation, and are here performed in musical composition.

ACT V. SCENE I.

Continues. ELFRIDA, ALBINA, &c. *discovered, with attendant Ladies.*

Albina.

DEAREST mistress,
Restrain this flood of tears, perhaps——

Elf. Perhaps!

Ah! mock me not with hopes.

Albina. We do not mean it:

For hope, tho' 'tis pale Sorrow's only cordial,
Has yet a dull and opiate quality,
Enfeebling what it lulls. It suits not you;
For, as we fear——

Elf. Do you too fear? Alas!

I flatter'd my poor soul that all its fears
Were Grief's distemper'd coinage, that my love
Rais'd causeless apprehensions, and, at length,
Edgar would quite forgive. I do bethink me,
My joy broke forth too rashly. When they left us,
His safety was not half secur'd; my pleading
Was not half heard. I should have follow'd Edgar,
Claim'd more full pardon, forc'd him to embrace
My sorrowing Lord.

Albina. We fear that sorrow more
Than Edgar's rage. We fear his fallen virtue.
Self-condemnation works most strongly on him,
Ev'n to despondency. 'Ev'n at his pardon,
'No joy flush'd on his cheek; we mark'd him well,
'He shew'd no sign of welcome. No, he took it
As who should say: "To give me aught but death

Is a poor boon unwish'd and unaccepted."

Too much we fear he'll do some impious act——

Elf. What, on his life? I thought I had explor'd
Each various face of danger: this escap'd me.
How miss'd I this? It suits his courage highly;
Suits too his fix'd remorse. But yet he will not—
No, Athelwold, thou wilt not kill Elfrida.

Albina. Oh may his love preserve him! may these shades
Receive him soon in peace! To this blest end
You sure should strive to calm your father's rage;
At least not suffer him, as now, retir'd
To brood o'er his revenge. For know, Elfrida,
Beneath the silent gloom of solitude
Tho' Peace can sit and smile, tho' meek Content
Can keep the chearful tenor of her soul,
Ev'n in the loneliest shades; yet let not Wrath
Approach, let black Revenge keep far aloof,
Or soon they flame to madness.

Elf. True, my Virgins;
Attend me then: I'll try each winning art;
'Tho' ill such art becomes me, yet I'll aim it.'——
Hark—whence that noise? I heard some hasty footsteps.

Albina. Oh Heav'ns! 'tis Edwin.

Enter EDWIN.

Elf. Edwin, ah! that look
Bespeaks too well the horror of thy errand.
Tell it me all.

Edwin. Alas!——

Elf. Nay, do not pause.
Tell it me all. I think it will not kill me.
Repeat each circumstance. I'm ready, Edwin,
Ev'n for the worst.

Edwin. Then hear that worst, Elfrida.
Soon as the stag had left yon westward thicket,
The King dismiss'd his Lords, each several ways,
To their best sport, bidding Earl Athelwold,
Lord Ardulph, and myself, attend his person.
Thus parted from the rest, the Monarch pierc'd
A darkling dell, which open'd in a lawn
Thick set with elm around. Suddenly here
He turn'd his steed, and cry'd—"This place befits
Our purpose well."

Elf. Purpose! what purpose, Edwin?
'Twas predetermin'd then, dissembling tyrant!
How could I trust or hope——

Edwin. Yet give me hearing:
Thus with a grave composure, and calm eye,
King Edgar spake. Now hear me, Athelwold;
Thy King has pardon'd this thy trait'rous act:
From all disloyal baseness to thy Prince
Thou stand'st absolv'd; yet, know, there still remains
Somewhat to cancel more. As man to man,
As friend to friend, now, Athelwold, I call thee
Straight to defend thy life with thy good sword.
Nay, answer not; defend it gallantly.
If thy arm prosper, this my dying tongue
Shall pardon thee, and bless thee. If thou fall'st,
Thy parting breath must to my right resign
Elfrida's beauties. At the word, both drew,
Both fought; but Athelwold's was ill-play'd passion.
He aim'd his falchion at the Monarch's head,
Only to leave his own brave breast defenceless.
And on the instant Edgar's rapid sword
Pierc'd my dear master's heart. He fell to earth,
And, falling, cry'd—"This wound atones for all."

Edgar, thus full aveng'd, will pardon me,
And my true wife with chaste, connubial tears,
Embalm my memory." He smil'd, and dy'd,

Elf. Nay, come not round me, Virgins, nor support me.
I do not swoon nor weep. I call not Heav'n
T' avenge my wretchedness. I do not wish
This tyrant's hand may wither with cold palsies.
No, I am very patient. Heav'n is just!
And when the measure of his crimes is full,
Will bare its red right arm, and lance its lightnings.
'Till then, ye elements, rest: and thou, firm Earth,
Ope not thy yawning jaws, but let this monster
Stalk his due time on thine affrighted surface.
Yes; let him still go on; still execute
His savage purposes, and daily make
More widows weep, as I do. Foolish eyes!
Why flow ye thus unbidden? What have tears
'To do with grief like mine?

Albina. Help, help, my sisters,
To bear her to the castle.

Enter ORGAR.

Orgar. As I past,
Methought I heard a sound of loud lament;
Elfrida, ah!

Elf. Is not my father there?
Withhold me not; I'll fall at his dear feet.
Oh Sir! behold your child thus lowly prostrate;
Avenge her wrongs, avenge your poor Elfrida,
Your helpless, widow'd daughter.

Orgar. Widow'd daughter!
What, is he slain?

Elf. Inhospitably butcher'd;

'The tyrant's savage self—Stand you thus cool?
'Where is the British spirit, where the fire
'Of Belin's race?—Oh foolishness of grief!
Alas! I had forgot; had Edgar spar'd him,
That sword, to which my madness call'd for vengeance,
Ere long was meant to do the bloody deed,
And make the murder parricide. Have I
No friend to do me right?

Orgar. Thou hast, my child;
I am thy friend, thy father. Trust my care.
'Edwin, a word.' Retire, my dearest daughter;
Virgins, conduct her in.

Elf. My father, no!
What do you do? I must not be withheld.
I'll to yon bloody grove, and clasp my husband,
My murder'd husband. Why restrain me, Sir?
Can my sad eye dart fire through his cold breast,
And light up life anew?

Orgar. Go in, my child,
And seek tranquility.

Elf. Tranquility!
I know her well; she is Death's pale-ey'd sister;
She's now in yonder grove, closing the lids
Of my poor Athelwold. That office done,
She'll bear his soul upon her gentle plumes
Up to the realms of joy. I'll follow them:
I know he'd have it so: he'll not be blest,
Ev'n on his throne of bliss, till I am with him.

Albina. This way, my dearest mistress.

Elf. Hold, nay hold;
Croud not around me. Let me pause a while.
Albina, thou alone shalt join my mis'ry;

I've much to utter to thy friendly ear.
Lead on, thou gentle maid ; thy single arm
Shall prop my trembling frame ; thy single voice
Speak peace to my afflictions. [Exit with Albina.

Orgar. On your lives,
Virgins, let no disturbing step approach her.
Say, Edwin (for I guess 'twas you that brought
These tidings hither) where was royal Edgar,
When late you left him ?

Edwin. At my master's side,
Repentant of the stroke.

Orgar. Comes he not back
To Harewood ?

Edwin. Heav'n forbid ! Elfrida's brain
Would madden at the sight.

Orgar. Mistake me not ;
I did not mean at this distressful hour
The King should see my daughter.

Edwin. No, for pity,
Do not profane this sabbath of her grief.
Oh ! be her sorrow sacred !

Orgar. Fear it not,
Her peace is my best care, and, to ensure it,
I'll, by your guidance, Edwin, haste this instant,
To find the Monarch. Some four miles from Harewood
Stands old Earl Egbert's castle, my fast friend.
With him will I persuade the King to sojourn,
Till my child's grief abate : that too to speed
Be it your business, Virgins. ' Watching ever
' Each happy interval, when your soft tongues
' May hint his praises, till, by practice won,
' She bear their fuller blazon.' Elfrid's welfare

Requires this friendly office at your hands ;
 And Edgar's virtues bear such genuine lustre,
 That Truth itself directs.—— [Exit Orgar.

Edwin. As Truth directs,
 So only should you act. This day has shewn
 What dire effects await its violation.
 ' Straight is the road of Truth, and plain ;
 ' And, tho' across the sacred way
 ' Ten thousand erring footsteps stray,
 ' 'Tis our's to walk direct,
 ' And, with sage caution circumspect,
 ' Pace slowly through the solemn scene.'

Enter ALBINA.

Albina. Has Orgar left the grove ?

Edwin. He has, Albina.

Albina. Then hear, and aid Elfrida's last resolve,
 Who takes the only way stern Fate has left
 To save her plighted faith for ever pure
 To her dead Athelwold.

' *Edwin.* Forbid it, Patience !
 ' Forbid it, that submissive calm of soul,
 ' Which teaches meek-ey'd Piety to smile
 ' Beneath the scourge of Heav'n !

' *Albina.* You need not fear it,
 ' She means not self-destruction. Thanks to heav'n,
 ' Huge and o'erbearing as her mis'ry is,
 ' It cannot so oblit'rate from her breast
 ' The written rule of duty.' Her pure soul
 Means on the instant to devote itself
 To heav'n and holiness. Assist her straight,
 Lest Edgar's presence and her father's rage
 Prevent the blest intention. See, she comes.

Enter ELFRIDA.

' Kneel on each side, devoutly kneel around her.'
Now breathe some note in high and solemn strain,
That Angels from their thrones of Light may hear,
And ratify her vow.

ELFRIDA kneels, and the Virgins divide into two Troops.

Albina. Hear, Angels, hear,
Hear from these nether thrones of Light ;
And oh ! in golden characters record
Each firm, immutable, immortal word,

CHORUS.

" Then wing your solemn flight
" Up to the heav'n of heav'ns, and there
" Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
" 'Mid the dread records of Eternity."

Elf. Hear first, that Athelwold's sad widow swears,
To rear a hallow'd convent o'er the place
Where stream'd his blood ; there will she weep through life,
Immur'd with this chaste throng of Virgins ; there
Each day shall six times hear her full-voic'd choir
Chaunt the slow requiem o'er her martyr'd lord ;
There too, when midnight low'rs with awful gloom,
She'll rise observant of the stated call
Of waking grief, bear the dim livid taper
Along the winding isles, and at the altar,
Kiss ev'ry pale shrine with her trembling lips,
Press the cold stone with her bent knee, and call
On sainted Athelwold.

CHORUS.

" Fear, Angels, hear,
" Hear from these nether thrones of Light ;

“ And oh ! in golden characters record
“ Each firm, immutable, immortal word.
“ Then wing your solemn flight
“ Up to the heav’n of heav’ns, and there
“ Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
“ ’Mid the dread records of Eternity.”

Elf. Hear next, that Athelwold’s sad widow swears
Never to violate the holy vow
She to his truth first plighted ; swears to bear
The sober singleness of widowhood
To her cold grave. If from this chaste resolve
She ev’n in thought should swerve ; if gaudy pomp
Or flatt’ring greatness e’er should tempt one wish
To stray beyond this purpose, may that Heav’n,
Which hears this vow, punish its violation,
As heav’nly justice ought !

CHORUS.

“ Hear, Angels, hear,
“ Hear from these nether thrones of Light ;
“ And oh ! in golden characters record
“ Each firm, immutable, immortal word.
“ Then wing your solemn flight
“ Up to the heav’n of heav’ns, and there
“ Hang the conspicuous tablet high,
“ ’Mid the dread records of Eternity.”



